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SUBJECT: PM MALIKI ON ELECTIONS LAW, INVESTMENT CONFERENCE,
JOINT SECURITY ARCHITECTURE, AND OIL

REF: BAGHDAD 2751

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher R. Hill for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In an October 17 meeting, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki expressed his concern to the Ambassador about the elections law and the timing for its passage due to political party maneuvering and to continued wrangling within the COR over Kirkuk and open vs. closed lists. The PM expressed hope that the Investment Conference would produce tangible benefits for Iraq and said that he would direct the Iraqi Investment Commission to inform him of any agreements that could be signed in his presence. The PM was optimistic on the progress being made to establish a joint security architecture in Ninewah Province, but indicated that critical details still needed to be worked out. Finally, the PM stated that the GOI was looking to diversify ways it could export oil and asked the Ambassador for information on whether the waters at the port of Umm Qasr had been completely demined because the GOI is planning to lay a new oil pipeline in the area. END SUMMARY.

Election Law

¶2. (C) The PM stated that he was working hard to prevent delay in the national elections scheduled for January 2010, but that the Iraqi Islamic Party and Fadhila Party were looking for any way possible -- including impeaching the Chairman of the Iraqi High Electoral Commission (IHEC) -- to postpone the elections in order to buy more time to better prepare themselves for the election. The PM praised Parliamentary Speaker Ayad Samarra'i's efforts to calm tensions within the Parliament on the election law, but also expressed concern that the issues of Kirkuk and open versus closed lists might prevent timely passage before he begins his Washington program on October 19. The Ambassador stated that he had met with Samarra'i three times over the past week and that passage of the law before the PM's meeting at the White House would be ideal. The Ambassador also stated that he had met with President Talabani on October 16, who indicated that there was movement toward a potential compromise on the Kirkuk issue that would be satisfactory to the Kurds. That compromise would be to establish a committee to examine voter lists not only in Kirkuk, but in areas with significant demographic shifts around the country.

Investment Conference

¶3. (C) The PM stated that he was looking to make the Iraqi Investment Conference as successful as possible and that he intended to focus on economic issues throughout his trip to Washington. He expressed hope that Vice President Biden would be able to attend the opening ceremonies in order to raise the conference's profile. The Ambassador responded that the VP would most likely be unavailable for the

conference due to previously scheduled international travel, but that it may be possible for the PM to meet him the day before the conference and that Secretary Clinton, Secretary Locke, and NSA Jones would be at the conference. The Ambassador also said that there was significant interest in the conference and that the recent passage of the Iraqi Investment Law was very helpful. Asked whether he was planning to sign any major contracts at the conference, the PM said that he would direct the Iraqi Investment Commission to bring any potential agreements to his attention so that he could be at the signing. The PM also said that during his visit he would like to make progress on the question of a UN Qvisit he would like to make progress on the question of a UN envoy.

Joint Security Architecture

¶4. (C) The Ambassador told the PM that the plan to establish joint security checkpoints in Ninewah Province appears to be moving forward. The PM agreed with this assessment and said that the idea is to have joint command and control structures between the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Peshmerga. The PM said that the Ministry of Defense's Ninewah Operations Command (NOC) would have supervision over the patrols, but that key details of where checkpoints would be located remain undecided. The PM also said that the Ninewah Governor, Atheel al-Najafi, had come to him with a different proposal, but that he had rejected it saying that the plan proposed by MNF-I was better. (Note: Al Hadba's Sheikh Abdullah al-Yawr also submitted a different proposal to General Odierno, but it is not clear whether Atheel's plan is the same as Sheikh

BAGHDAD 00002793 002 OF 002

Abdullah's. End note.) The Ambassador stated that he believed that even just the dialogue between the Arabs and Kurds in Ninewah on joint security architecture had helped to lower tensions and expressed hope that if the joint patrols were successful, that the model could be replicated in Kirkuk.

Oil and Water in Basrah

¶5. (C) The PM said that the GOI was now looking at ways to diversify the channels through which it could export oil abroad and was looking to repair a pipeline that traveled through Syria. The PM also stated that the GOI wanted to lay a pipeline on the sea floor at the port of Umm Qasr and asked the Ambassador whether the port had been completely cleared of undersea mines. The Ambassador promised to follow up on the issue, noting that he had been very pleased with his recent visit to Basrah and Umm Qasr and was encouraged by the focus of Basrah officials on investment and economic development rather than just security. The PM said that the GOI was still focused on the water issue in Basrah and was looking to purchase additional water treatment equipment from a company in California (reftel) in addition to its long-term plans of building a dam on the Shat al-Arab to prevent sea water from contaminating the fresh water supplies in the areas.
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